



## STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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# IDAHO TAKES LEAD IN DEVELOPING NEXT GENERATION OF ASSESSMENTS NATIONWIDE

BOISE – Idaho is a leader in the 31-state consortium that was awarded a \$160 million Race to the Top Assessment grant to build the next generation of assessments.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the grant award at a meeting of state educational leaders in Washington, D.C. today. The U.S. Department of Education awarded two federal Race to the Top Assessment grants: one to the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium and the other to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career.

Idaho is a governing state in the 31-state SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, which applied for the grant in June. Idaho's Deputy Superintendent of Assessment Dr. Carissa Miller has been elected to serve on the consortium's executive committee that will administer and oversee the four-year grant.

"This is a great day for Idaho. We are becoming a national leader in many of our efforts, including our work to improve the assessment tools available to educators in the classroom," Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said. "Our goal is to ensure every student graduates from high school prepared to go on to postsecondary education or the workforce without the need for remediation. To accomplish this, we must have high-quality assessment tools in place to measure student progress throughout the school year and provide immediate feedback to parents, teachers and students."

Idaho and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium states will use the grant money over four years to develop a comprehensive assessment system that measures student achievement in grades 3-8 and 11 and assesses problem solving and complex thinking skills. States will have the option of adding assessments in grades 9 and 10. The assessment system will include end-of-year assessments and assessment tools that teachers can use to measure student progress throughout the school year.

Specifically, the consortium of states will create state-of-the-art adaptive online exams. The online system will provide accurate assessment information to teachers and others on the progress of all students, including those with disabilities, English language learners and low- and high-performing students. It will include:

1. A summative exam, required by No Child Left Behind, offered twice each school year;
2. An optional formative, or benchmark, exams; and
3. A variety of tools, processes and practices for teachers to use in planning and implementing informal, ongoing assessments. This will assist teachers in understanding what students are and are not learning on a daily basis so they can adjust instruction accordingly.

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Based on the consortium's work, students will have the option to take formative exams, which provide guidance to teachers about instructional milestones. These formative tests and multiple opportunities to take what are traditionally year-end summative exams will move the testing process away from the traditional one-size-fits-all state exams. The goal is for students who score well on specific learning standards earlier in the school year not to be tested on those standards later on an end-of-the-year test because they've already demonstrated proficiency.

Teachers in Idaho and other participating states will be involved at all stages of item and test development, including the writing, scoring and the design of reporting systems. Educators will also be able to access a reporting system that identifies each student's strengths, weakness and progress toward college and career readiness.

The assessments will be tied to the Common Core State Standards to ensure students graduate from high school ready for postsecondary education or the workforce. The Common Core State Standards are a voluntary, state-led initiative to raise the bar on standards in mathematics and English language arts. Idaho has played an integral role in developing these standards. The State Board of Education and Idaho Legislature will be deciding in the coming year whether or not to adopt the Common Core State Standards. These standards are now available for public comment at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/common/>.

A seven-person executive committee, led by co-chairs Judy Park of Utah and Tony Alpert of Oregon, will oversee the SMARTER Balanced Assessment consortium grant. Other committee members include Joe Willhoft (Washington), Carissa Miller (Idaho), Joseph Martineau (Michigan), Lynette Russell (Wisconsin) and Dan Hupp (Maine).

"Idaho has been at the forefront in delivering assessments online. This partnership is an opportunity to build an online system that includes assessments that transcend state boundaries and give us the chance to see how Idaho students compare to their peers around the world," Miller said. "Idaho is excited to be a part of this unique venture."

Funding for the Race to the Top Assessment grant will begin October 1. Here is a list of states participating in the SMARTER Balanced Consortium:

Alabama	Michigan*	Oregon*
Colorado	Missouri*	Pennsylvania
Connecticut*	Montana*	South Carolina
Delaware	Nevada*	South Dakota
Georgia	New Hampshire	Utah*
Hawaii*	New Jersey	Vermont*
Idaho*	New Mexico*	Washington*
Iowa	North Carolina*	West Virginia*
Kansas*	North Dakota	Wisconsin*
Kentucky	Ohio	
Maine*	Oklahoma	

*\*Denotes governing states*

Learn more about the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER>.

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